

REMARKS

Claims 12-18 and 26 are pending and at issue.

Reconsideration of the above identified application, in view of the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejection

The Examiner has maintained a rejection of pending claims 12-18 and 26 under §103 as being unpatentable over Gebhardt in view of U.S. patent 5,052,995 to Focke et al.(Focke). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's contention that several arguments advanced in the previous amendment are not fully supported by language in the claims. However, before this issue is discussed in detail, Applicants believe a brief summary of the cited references is in order.

Gebhardt discloses the use of rotating drums with gripping devices as part of a mechanism to interlock separate bags. These gripping devices interfold bags so that each bag is interlocked with a preceding and succeeding bag in a staggered manner. This method of folding results in an effect similar to a box of tissues whereas as one tissue is removed the next pops out of the box. Gebhardt does not disclose that the bags are joined together in any way. The staggered folded bags do not form a continuous connected web, as required by the present claims. In fact the Examiner has previously contended that while "Gebhardt does not disclose that the bags are joined together in any way ... Shore's reference clearly discloses that the webs are joined together via web portions 18." Applicants have previously pointed out that while this is true, it is not relevant, as Shore shows connections 18 only between the side-by-side strips 16 (in the cross-direction) to

provide a wide web including a plurality of connected strips`16. This deficiency is not cured by the substitution of the newly applied Focke reference.

The Examiner maintains that while ‘Gebhardt does not disclose ... joining the ends of the webs together ... Focke discloses similar method of packaging a web with joining of ends of the webs together”, and that therefore it would have been obvious to have “modified Gebhardt’s method of packaging a web by having the step of joining ends of the webs together, as suggested by Focke, in order to run continuous web of material in a plurality of connected stacks.” Applicants respectfully traverse this ground of rejection.

The Focke reference is directed to equipment for the handling of cardboard blanks and feeding the blanks to receiving equipment for creating packaging from the blanks. The blanks are made from a continuous web of material which is folded in a zig-zag manner to create a stack of folded blanks. However, as shown in Figs. 2 and 6 of Focke, as one stack of blanks is created, the web material is shifted to an adjacent position and another stack is formed. See 3:28-38. This process is continued until, in the example of Figs. 2 and 6, seven stacks are created, which are continuously connected, end to end. This method is limited to the creation of a single stack at a time. After creation of the stack, either the pallet supporting the stack or the mechanism supplying the folded web must be shifted in position to allow a subsequent stack to be formed. Even if a stack included a row of several connected blanks, the entire row would have to be fed into the packaging machine and separated and processed simultaneously.

While the Examiner contends that the continuous nature of the present web is not set forth in the claims, Applicants do not agree with such an assessment since claim 12 clearly recites that the ends of the two or more narrower webs are joined together so that the two or more narrower

webs form a continuous whole whose length corresponds to a combined length of the two or more narrower webs. It is clear on its face that a “continuous whole” formed by joined webs is a continuous web. However, for the purpose of clarification only Applicants have amended claim 12 to recite that a continuous web is formed. Applicants respectfully and strongly contend that the present amendments do not raise additional issues that require further searching and/or consideration since these amendments do not add any additional limitations nor do they further limit any existing limitation.

Once again and in contrast to the cited references, the packaging method of the present invention permits the simultaneous formation of multiple, adjacent stacks of folded material from the rotary reel mechanism which permits simultaneous feeding, folding and stacking of the narrower adjacent webs of the slit web. After the multiple stacks of the adjacent narrower webs have been created, the ends of the narrower webs are joined “so that the two or more narrower webs form a continuous whole whose length corresponds to a combined lengths of the two or more narrower webs as required by the present claims.” Applicants respectfully submit that the present claimed method of packaging a web is not at all “similar” as the method employed by the Focke machinery. The present method permits a narrower web (or blank) of a multi-stack package to be fed into a processing mechanism a single width at a time. This advantage is not possible with the Focke approach, which requires downstream separation of adjacent blanks. The Focke package is thus limited to either (1) supplying complex equipment which can separate and simultaneously process multiple adjacent blanks of material; or (2) a package of successive single blank width stacks formed one stack at a time, each joined continuously end to end.

forth in Applicants' previous amendment. For the foregoing reasons, applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of claims 12-18 and 26 under §103 has been overcome and thus request that these rejections be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above remarks, it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered and that all pending claims be allowed and the case passed to issue since the present clarifying amendments place the application in condition for allowance without requiring any additional consideration and/or searching.

If there are any other issues remaining which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

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Respectfully submitted,

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